

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announces successful piping plover nesting season

Updates on other beachnesting birds

Photo: A female piping plover at Cape Henlopen State Park. DNREC photo by Kevin Bronson.

LEWES – The data is in, and DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife is reporting another successful nesting season for piping plovers in Delaware. For the second year in a row, Delaware established its all-time high number of recorded nesting piping plover pairs, with 19 pairs producing 52 fledglings.

Last year, Delaware had 16 pairs producing 36 fledglings. In 2019, four pairs of piping plovers nested at the Point at Cape Henlopen State Park, with 15 pairs nesting at Fowler Beach at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, a relatively new nesting site used by nesting piping plovers starting in 2016 following a habitat restoration project.

For the third year in a row, piping plovers did not nest at Gordons Pond within Cape Henlopen State Park, possibly due to the combined factors of encroaching vegetation limiting sandy nesting habitat, and the availability of more attractive nesting habitat at Fowler Beach.

The piping plover is a federally-listed threatened species and a Delaware state-listed endangered species. Recovery of the species involves partnerships between DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks and Recreation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services.

In other beachnesting bird updates, two pairs of American oystercatchers nested at the Point at Cape Henlopen State Park and one pair nested at Delaware Seashore State Park, but none successfully hatched chicks. Approximately 23 pairs of least terns were found nesting at Cape Henlopen State Park this year, hatching two chicks, one of which fledged.

For additional information on piping plovers or other beachnesting birds, please call Henrietta Bellman with the Division of Fish & Wildlife's Species Conservation and Research Program at 302-735-3600.

Media contact: Joanna Wilson, DNREC Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

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